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CURRENT PRACTICE IN THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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During the last decade junior high schools have multiplied throughout the United States in a phenomenal manner. Recently the writer co-operated in making a study of forty junior high schools in Kansas and of an almost equal number in Indiana. The median year for the establishment of the schools studied in Kansas was 1917; and for Indiana, 1916. The last decade has been the period during which the great majority of junior high schools have been established throughout the country as a whole. So-called junior high schools have been established in towns varying in size from several hundred to fifty thousand or more in population.

Many wholesome tendencies are represented in this attempt at reorganization of secondary education. However, there are certain cautions necessary lest the movement become a mere mushroom affair. Mere iconoclasm is of little consequence. But constructive criticism is essential in the midst of this transitional stage in secondary education.

Claims, functions, and standards relating to junior high schools have been set up from time to time by educators and published by educational associations. In some instances these purposes have been realized in practice. More frequently, the reorganization of secondary schools under the appellation junior high school has been more or less camouflage, if judged in terms of the claims made. This does not mean that we are to give up in our attempt at wholesome reorganization, but it does mean that we need constantly to make genuine, scientific analyses of our objectives and practices.

The assumptions made in this discussion are based upon concrete facts embodied in a dozen or more summary tables resulting from the two studies mentioned. It is impossible in a brief account

to give more than a few representative tables based upon these studies. The tendencies in the way of external organization and the appellations used in the schools considered are shown in Tables I and II. The other material in these studies was collected and tabulated in like fashion.

TABLE I
THE FORM OF ORGANIZATION AND THE APPELLATIONS USED IN FORTY
NON-EIGHT-FOUR SCHOOLS IN KANSAS

Form of Organization	Number of Schools	Appellation	Number of Schools
6-3-3.....	12	Junior high.....	27
6-2-4.....	24	Intermediate.....	2
6-6.....	2	Departmental.....	10
7-1-4.....	1	Junior school.....	1
6-2½-3½.....	1		
Total.....	40	Total.....	40

TABLE II
THE FORM OF ORGANIZATION AND THE APPELLATIONS USED IN THIRTY-TWO
NON-EIGHT-FOUR SCHOOLS IN INDIANA

Form of Organization	Number of Schools	Appellation	Number of Schools
6-3-3.....	11	Junior high.....	22
6-2-4.....	10	Departmental.....	5
6-6.....	6	Indefinite.....	2
1-12.....	1	No answer.....	3
7-1-4.....	1		
5-3-4.....	3	Total.....	32
Total.....	32		

Table I indicates that 60 per cent of the schools studied in Kansas have the 6-2-4 type of external organization, 30 per cent have the 6-3-3 plan, and 5 per cent the 6-6 form. Two other forms reported were the 7-1-4, and the 6-2½-3½. This does not necessarily mean that the 6-2-4 plan represents the present tendency. The predominance of this form is due, in part, to the fact that the seventh and eighth grades had previously existed within the 8-4 scheme of organization and administration, these grades in some instances using the departmental plan of teaching. Only one school out of

the forty does not make the first break in organization at the end of the first six grades of the elementary school. Ten schools out of the twelve listed as having the 6-3-3 plan used the name junior high school; one used the term intermediate school, and one was referred to as the departmental plan. Sixteen schools out of the twenty-four having the 6-2-4 plan used the name junior high school; seven used the term departmental, and one the term intermediate. The tendency to use the appellation junior high rather than departmental even in the 6-2-4 plan is clearly indicated by the findings of the Kansas study which show that 67.5 per cent of the schools prefer the appellation junior high school, and 25 per cent prefer the term departmental.

Six different forms of external organization are represented by the thirty-two non-eight-four schools of Indiana. The list may be regarded as representative of the state as a whole. Some of the forms listed are rare. Childs once reported twenty-two schools having the 6-3-3 plan, nine schools having the 6-2-4, two schools having the 7-2-3, one school having the 7-1-4, and one school having the 5-3-4 plan. About 34 per cent of the thirty-two schools studied in the present instance are composed of the 6-3-3 type; about 31 per cent of the 6-2-4 type; about 18 per cent of the 6-6 type; and about 15 per cent of other types.

Throughout the United States at the present time there are a dozen or more forms of external organization. There is a large uniformity of practice in breaking our educational ladder at the end of the sixth grade of the elementary school. There is a great variety of practice relative to the breaks made during the six-year unit of secondary education. The most frequent forms are the 6-6, the 6-3-3, and the 6-2-4 plans. There is considerable justification for raising the question whether many of the apparent attempts at reorganization have not resulted merely in shifting the break to a different place from that under the 8-4 régime. Certain it is that unity in any real sense has not always been realized in practice. Differentiation, at whatever stage it has been begun, has been in many instances mechanical and perfunctory.

The claim of increased retention of pupils has been almost universal. It is doubtful whether this claim has been widely

justified in terms of any very reliable measure. Enrolment in high schools of all forms of organization has increased very rapidly during the period of the development of the junior high school. This is due to a complexity of social, economic, and industrial factors. We need an improved technique of measuring the mortality of pupils and further studies of the comparative holding power of junior high schools and other plans of organization.

No doubt more than 50 per cent of the reorganized secondary schools of the country now promote pupils by subject rather than by grade. Sixty per cent of the forty Kansas schools and over 59 per cent of the thirty-two Indiana schools reported promotion by subject. The majority of these schools promote backward as well as accelerant children irregularly. We are lacking greatly, however, in a knowledge of the exact nature of such promotions. A precise knowledge of the manner of the promotions of subnormal and of supernormal pupils bears directly on the profitable treatment of individual differences. In addition to knowing promotion practices, we ought to continue to standardize our use of the terms subnormal and supernormal, retarded and accelerant. The clarification of this terminology would reduce ambiguity and wasteful discussion.

Credit for quality has gained ground during the last ten years. Several suggestive discussions have appeared in defense of this practice. A number of actual forms of practice of giving credit for quality have been reported. A study of different states indicates that too great conservatism prevails in this matter in junior high schools. Less than half of these schools have departed from the practice of giving credit on the basis of quantitative achievement only. There is a hopeful sign in the fact that perhaps one-fourth of these schools are beginning to use general intelligence tests for classifying pupils and for supplementing teachers' ratings. Kansas reports the use of intelligence tests in 35 per cent of the forty schools. There is considerable haziness among junior high school teachers and other school officers as to what is meant by the distinction between quality and quantity. It seems justifiable to assume that a part of the realization of economy in the educative process lies in giving recognition to quality in determining the credit to be given.

There has been some improvement relative to the teaching load under the reorganized plans. From 25 to 50 per cent of all junior high schools conform to the normal requirement of five teaching periods per day, of from forty to forty-five minutes each. Over 60 per cent of the Kansas academic teachers and less than 50 per cent of those in Indiana are reported as teaching five periods per day.

Apparently some headway has been made in the matter of supervised study. Considerably over 75 per cent of the junior high schools report supervised study of one type or another. Kansas reports some form of supervised study in thirty-five of forty schools, and Indiana in twenty-five of thirty-two schools. Seven varieties of time division for recitation and study plans were reported in Indiana. Practically all manner of time divisions of the class hour between recitation and study are reported. There is some tendency to increase the length of the period devoted to both recitation and study. There is little doubt but that an overclaim has been made for the virtues of supervised study in reorganized secondary education. One urgent need in this respect is a clearer statement of the technique involved in supervising the study of junior high school pupils. If supervised study is to be of real value in junior high school procedure, it will be necessary to make a study of the problem in great detail. Tabulated results from various states indicate that present conditions relative to supervised study are somewhat chaotic. The characteristics of the technique of supervised study in the subjects taught in the junior high school ought to be much more thoroughly standardized. The junior high school pupil, because of his relative immaturity, ought to have the very best guidance of this sort which it is possible to devise.

It is conceded by all that the success of reorganized secondary schools is largely dependent upon the ability of the instructional staff to be in full command of all the problems and principles involved in the presentation of subject-matter. One of the most hopeful tokens, on this point, is that over three-fourths of these teachers have had experience in teaching previous to their entrance upon junior high school instruction. These teachers come from the grades both above and below, but in much the larger numbers

from the grades below. The fact that comparatively few inexperienced teachers have been employed in junior high schools tends to insure the success of instructional work. In the Kansas study, only twenty-two teachers of a total of 460 were reported as inexperienced before entrance upon junior high school teaching. In Indiana, twelve teachers of 304 were reported as inexperienced. Of course, the degree of success in previous experience, as well as the type of training these teachers have had, needs to be taken into account.

Considerable gain has been made recently in the matter of the academic and vocational training of both academic and vocational teachers. Differences of opinion as to the requirements and qualifications of junior high school teachers exist in the minds of different school men and women. The tendency is to demand more and more training. In general, less than 50 per cent of the academic teachers have the Bachelor's degree. The vocational teachers hold degrees in smaller numbers, but in increasing proportion. Over 50 per cent of the academic teachers have had eleven semester hours in the study of education, the minimum requirement of the North Central Association. The vocational teachers report this professional training in smaller numbers at present but again in increasing proportion.

Closely connected with training is the question of salary. In the majority of junior high schools the salaries of teachers are less than in senior high schools. In a limited number of localities the salaries are the same. There is general agreement to the effect that salaries shall be dependent in part upon academic and professional training and in part upon tenure and successful experience. Both senior high school and junior high school teachers may rightfully be expected to have training in professional study, especially in presentation of subject-matter. It was noted earlier that most junior high school teachers have had previous teaching experience. It might be assumed that the amount of experience invariably increases teaching efficiency. Obviously this is not necessarily true. It is evident that salaries ought to be based upon at least two factors among others, namely, training and successful experience. Unless junior high school teachers have training in academic

subject-matter and professional study as well as successful experience equal to the senior high school teachers, there is justification for giving them a lower salary than is paid to senior high school teachers.

The housing of junior high schools is not usually the result of scientific management. The buildings and rooms are largely the outgrowth of accidental circumstances and local emergency situations. Many factors need to be considered in the housing of these schools. An industrial center, a railroad division center, and an agricultural center present only three types of conditions that need to be considered in erecting buildings. Naturally, only the larger cities tend to house schools separately. Housing, so far as rooms are concerned, has been very largely a matter of administrative convenience. In the main, there has been considerable improvement in school architecture and equipment. But we are far from scientific management at present in housing. It will scarcely be possible or desirable to standardize housing on a uniform pattern for all junior high school communities. There are varying factors in different localities, and reliable and extensive surveys of all the facts should be made.

The administration of teaching and of the schedule is intimately connected with the manner of housing. The tendency is to combine the junior high school program with that of the senior high school rather than with that of the grades below. In 50 per cent of the cases or more there is a separate junior high school principal. In the matter of supervision of the junior high school, there is wide variation of practice. In some states there are at least seven different combinations of supervisory officers. For example, junior and senior high school principals supervise individually or conjointly. Again, the superintendent supervises alone, or the superintendent and principal conjointly. The size of the school often determines this. There is a real need for an analytic statement of the duties of the junior high school principal or supervisor.

One of the most pressing problems for solution is the satisfactory administration of junior high school curricula. The actual nature of these curricula is not easy to determine from printed programs of study. Indiana reported a score of occupational activities, such as mills, factories, shops, and so forth. There is some recognition

given to these activities in the arrangement of the school curricula. Increasing offerings of foreign language, mathematics, and science below the ninth grade are reported. Work of a vocational nature was very widely represented, due in part, no doubt, to the fact that some work of this sort is required by state law.

Recently an increased interest has been manifested in a clearer and revised statement of secondary-school objectives. An analysis of occupational activities and processes involved in different occupations has been suggested as a reliable means of determining specific objectives in education. In every state, in the communities represented by junior high schools, there are at least a score or more of occupational activities represented. Job-analysis should be the method of procedure in determining the demands represented by the occupational experiences of the pupils. The newer subjects have become generally entrenched in the curricula of the junior high schools. There has been considerable gain in the way of incorporating in school curricula materials corresponding to the performances, interests, and experiences of the occupations represented in the homes of the children who attend the schools. There is very much yet to be done, however, in developing a real functional relationship between so-called school learning processes and extra-curricular experiences and processes. It is true that the more traditional subjects of Latin and mathematics have been introduced below the ninth grade. But it is questionable whether the subject-matter in such subjects has been really re-worked and reshaped so as to meet the individual needs of junior high school pupils any better in many instances than was the case under non-reorganization conditions. It occurs to the writer that the job-analysis attitude of mind must be carried over into both the traditional and non-traditional subjects of the junior high school. The content of the subjects taught in junior high schools needs to be outlined in much clearer detail before we can establish the claim of differentiation of subject-matter so as to meet individual needs.